

Health Sciences Pathway Landscape Assessment

Strengthening a health sciences workforce that builds health and wealth for all

Physicians and Surgeons

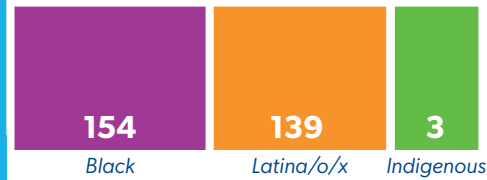
A health sciences workforce that reflects the communities it serves is essential to creating better health outcomes and drives inclusive economic opportunities. The greater Kansas City region is quite diverse with large populations of people of color and includes several rural communities. Health Forward commissioned a regional landscape assessment to study the health sciences workforce and its educational and career pathways.

In 2024, NORC at the University of Chicago conducted a mixed-methods assessment of the Greater Kansas City region's community health ecosystem. The goal was to deepen understanding of how to better support individuals who are under-represented in health professions, **including those living in rural areas**. The data shared in this infographic are critical findings from this larger assessment. You can access the [full report here](#), including its methodologies and catchment areas.

Medical doctors have the most severe racial and ethnic disparities across all health occupations in the Kansas City region.

All Physicians and Surgeons

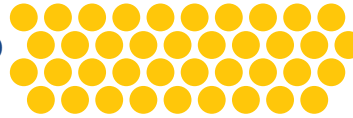
The number of physicians and surgeons needed to close the representation gap by 2034.



Doctors providing core primary and behavioral health care have the largest representation gaps as shown below. ±

Family Medicine
Black and Latino

39



Internal Medicine
Black, Latino and Indigenous

27



OB/GYN
Black and Latino

5



Psychiatrist
Black and Latino

9



Emergency Medicine*
Black and Latino

8



Pediatrics
Black and Latino

8



● =1 practitioner

± These numbers are calculated based on disproportionality indexes and parity estimates as described in NORC's report. See page 5 and Appendix F (pp. 95-122) for more explanation.

* Many patients, especially those with limited access, receive primary care services through emergency departments.

Qualitative Findings from Community Listening Sessions

In September 2024, Health Forward's community partners facilitated a listening session with 30 physicians of color from the Kansas City region.

Faculty of color offer valuable leadership and mentorship yet face persistent recruitment and retainment challenges;

institutions that adopt models to identify and elevate these faculty strengthen pathways for support and advancement.

Diverse representation in leadership and clinical roles enhances recruitment, retention, and belonging;

Kansas City's evolving commitment to representative leadership offers new opportunities for inclusion.

Mentorship and advocacy by physicians of color create powerful networks of support;

expanding structured programs and supporting mentors to prevent burnout can multiply these positive impacts across career stages.

Unique skills and perspectives of physicians of color enrich patient care and education;

recognizing and rewarding these contributions can drive innovation and equity.

Early engagement in STEM empowers students of color to envision and pursue health sciences careers;

representation builds confidence and broadens pathways.

Physicians of color model self-advocacy and community participation, and need support from those more experienced (e.g., negotiations, conflict management), inspiring others to take active roles in their health and careers.

Financial assistance and scholarships unlock potential for aspiring physicians of color;

expanding these resources increases access and opportunity.

Community-building initiatives and operationalizing plans for systemic change

can close gaps and advance equity throughout the health sciences workforce.

NORC's Recommendations

Implement practices and interventions that can increase diversity within the physician and surgeon workforce.

Suggestions to address this disparity include:

- Mentorship programs for under-represented high school and undergraduate students interested in medicine
- Implementing holistic review practices that fully examine characteristics and abilities of medical school applicants
- Scholarships for underrepresented students
- Mentorship for underrepresented medical students, residents, and fellows
- Cultivating supportive networks among physicians and surgeon groups to retain physicians of color in the region's workforce

These recommendations are based on the comments and perspectives of participants in the landscape assessment and the reflections and observations of members of the NORC assessment team.